

Obituaries: As You Like It

Course Content

For most of us, our obituary – published in a newspaper or online – is the last word on our lives, and shapes the way we're remembered. Yet many people leave the task of preparing their obituary to bereaved family members and funeral homes. The result may be an incomplete memorial tribute, omitting details and facts considered important by the deceased. In this course, we'll explore the history of obituaries, look at examples from the heartbreaking to the hilarious, and have the opportunity to create our own obituaries – as we would like them.

This course will include a good deal of discussion, some reflection and a bit of writing, for those who choose to prepare outlines or drafts of their own obituaries – a pre-bituary. Participants will be encouraged to share their work and provide constructive feedback.

Week 1

- What is an obituary?
 - Why is it worth thinking about our own?
 - History of obituaries
 - Course goals: write your own, or create notes for those who will
 - Discussion

Week 2

- Obituaries in popular culture
- A look at some actual obituaries

Week 3

- Elements of a good obituary
- Exercise: Organizing our thoughts
- Handout: Obituary questionnaire

Week 4

- Review and discussion of current obituaries: What makes them interesting, or not?
- Share your own outline, or draft obituary

Week 5

- Share your own outline, or draft obituary

- Getting to polished prose
- What's next?

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